

## REFERENCE

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WHITE-BROWED COUCAL *CENTROPUS SUPERCILIOSUS* ROBBING NEST OF  
GROSBEAK WEAVER *AMBYLOSPIZA ALBIFRONS* OF EGGS

On 11 February 1984 at 09:00 at the swamp near point 27c in Nairobi National Park, I was observing a pair of Grosbeak Weavers at their nest, situated about 2 m above the water level in reeds.

When both weavers were away from the nest a White-browed Coucal investigated it and began to tear it apart. It gained entry for its head (not through the weavers' entry hole) and removed an egg, which it took below into the reeds. Five minutes later it returned and, after tearing away part of the nest, removed a second egg, again taking it in its beak into the reeds below the nest. After a further five minutes it returned to the nest, whereupon the female Grosbeak Weaver returned. The female weaver showed no aggression but the coucal left the scene. After inspecting the nest the weaver left, and had not returned half an hour later.

From my observations it would seem that the coucal possibly ate the eggs. I can find no reference to such activity in the literature at my disposal, which is considerable.

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HINDE'S PIED BABBLER *TURDOIDES HINDEI* SOUTH OF MACHAKOS, KENYA

Hinde's Pied Babbler is a little known species endemic to the eastern and southeastern periphery of the central Kenya highlands. It has been the subject of much comment, admirably summarized by Plumb (1979) - hereafter quoted as 'Plumb' - with reference, amongst other things, to its apparently radical contraction of range during this century. A record from a locality where it has been considered extinct is thus significant.

Early in the morning of 27 November 1983, while collecting data for the Kenya bird atlas scheme (Lewis & Pomeroy in prep.), I located a group of these babblers on Potha ranch (1.35S, 37.14E), about 8 km south of Machakos, Kenya. The party of at least five birds was in and around the thickets along a narrow wooded stream valley, and the birds had moved a few hundred metres along this dry watercourse when they were seen by participants in an EANHS excursion about three hours later.

The watercourse is a tributary of the Ikiwe River, which ultimately flows into the Athi; Plumb notes other localities for this species associated with the headwaters of the Athi. The habitat resembles the second type noted by Plumb for the species in the Embu District, i.e. bushy stream gullies in quite dry and open woodland. The individuals in the group had similar plumage, with no obvious albinism. Their behaviour was very similar to Plumb's descriptions:

a) they frequented the dense thickets on the watercourse's edge where, when